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ABSTRACT

An overview of preschool education in Lagos State, Nigeria, is particularized with findings from a survey of 156 teachers in 25 Nigerian nursery schools. In Nigeria, urbanization has been accompanied by rapid growth in the number of pre-primary institutions. The educational aims of such institutions include both cognitive and social-emotional developmental improvement, but in practice, cognitive activities based on rote memorization and repetition are emphasized to prepare children for the competition for first place in primary school classes. Classrooms, usually attached to primary schools, are filled with chairs and benches; children are required to remain in seats. The average age of children entering nursery school is 2.5 years, and the average caregiver/child ratio is 1 to 35. While older and more experienced teachers primarily viewed early childhood education programs as offshoots of the primary school, they also perceived early childhood education as an opportunity for developing socialization skills. Findings of follow-up interviews explain the apparent contradiction: If teachers seemed to favor a more open classroom emphasizing the development of social-emotional skills within a socialization environment, they did so only as a means for fostering cognitive skills such as spoken English or alphabet writing in exercise books. (RH)

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NURSERY SCHOOL EDUCATION IN NIGERIA:

Impact on Families and Society

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For generations, Nigerian parents have been the principal motivators in determining their childrens' future. Traditionally, boys followed in their father's footsteps; girls became housewives and mothers. With the advent of rapid technological change in the 20th century and the impact of a formal educational system adapted from western societies, a broader range of occupations was opened to the boys and, to a lesser degree, the girls. However, a child's parents still determined for the most part his/her future occupational career. "We want Chuka to become a doctor." Or "we're preparing Kemi to become a schoolteacher." Noone was concerned about the child's interests. Chuka and Kemi did as they were told; thought what they were taught to think. Up to the present day, Nigerian parents still continue to exhibit a strong degree of control over the preparation of their child's future. With the advent of universal primary education in the 80's, more children will be able to receive a minimum of a primary school education. Decisions about a child's future may not be shared. The school's influence may exert greater effect on the child than that of the parent. Although parents may continue to believe that they exert the greatest amount of influence, those who continue to dominate their child's acts of decision-making may not only damage their child's chances for independent thinking but may also hinder future parent-child relationships.

Changing patterns of parental influence and creating chances for independent thought development are two ways in which education is having an impact on Nigerian society and the Nigerian family.

Today we know that if children are allowed to discover their own interests, they tacitly show their parents and teachers what they want their futures to be. When given access to materials and allowed to use them independently, they begin to formulate ideas on their own.

Although we can talk about discovery, independent thinking and exploration in educatinn, the Nigerian educational system as it presently exists is not able to meet the most modern advances in child development theory and educational reform. This is not to say, however, that Nigerians must remain, as Benjamin S. Bloom (1978) states, "innocent in education" (15), because we have not put our own house in order. We need to be much clearer about what we do and do not know ao that we do not continually confuse the two:

> If I could have one wish for education during the next decade, it would be the systematic ordering of our basic knowledge in such a way that what is known and true could be acted on, for what is superstition, fad and myth can be recognized as such and used only when there is nothing else to support it in our frustration and despair. (Bloom, 1978,20)

New knowledge, new methods of detecting and measuring phenomena, and improved communications have made Nigerians aware of the many ways in which they are influenced by forces surrounding them, within Nigerian society and throughout the world. In some instances, frustration is experienced because there are no ready adaptations for the educational practices deemed important for Nigerian learners. In other instances, Nigerians have quickly learned how to deal responsively with the problems that are everpresent.

The past decade has shown some dramatice instances of educational change. The National Policy on Education issued in 1977 and the introduction of Universal Primary Education by 1982 are only two examples. Within the next decade, we can expect continuous modifications as new knowledge and changes in basic principles force alterations in Nigerian educational institutions and educative processes not so much from taste and whim but since awareness requires these changes.

One suchaarea which requires careful study, not only in the urban but also in the rural area, is that of preschool or nursery education, the first environment that increasing numbers of Nigerian children enter once they leave home.

As a pilot study of nursery education in Lagos State (the most populous state of Nigeria and the capital) this study unfolds with an overview of preschool education in the state and its impact on families and Lagosian society. Some teachers' views on the purposes and perspectives of preschool education are then considered. The nursery school environment with a close look at some classrooms is then depicted and seen as a limitation to learning.

Overview of Preschool Education

The impact of social and economic change is readily seen as one drives from one end of Lagos to the other, whether east or west, north or south. The garbage heaps, the slums; the high rise apartment buildings and the newly renovated industrial sites; the UPE instant schools and the backyard soccer fields are all seen in the midst of the major expressways. Holes are in the roads; there is lack of water and inconsistent electricity. Conversations with residents of the state reveal such critical problems as the

rising cost of living creating hardships, in particular, on low and mid-income families and the increasing necessity for mothers of young children to go to work. Families, who a few decades ago remained in their hometowns in the rural areas, have moved to the urban center in hopes of a more affluent lifestyle with better opportunities for themselves and their children. Families, who once could afford domestic help, can no longer find domestic workers, especially with the introduction of universal primary education.

How are families coping with some of these stresses to urban living? One such coping mechanism is for parents to find assistance for the care of their children. There has been a rapid growth of various types of pre-primary institutions in the state. Statistics received from the Lagos State Ministry of Education show that in 1972 there were 43 pre-primary institutions. By 1977 the number had risen to 76; 1979 to 106; 1982 to 212. A 400 percent increase was seen within a ten year period. These statistics reflect only the pre-primary institutions that are registered in the Ministry of Education. They in no way show the multitude of day care canters, baby tenders, infant centers and day care homes that are advertised on almost every major corner or intersection in Lagos. The environments of these various institutions vary from ideal schools to appalling centers in dirt compounds and make-shift buildings and garages.

As the growth of preschool education continues -- almost indiscriminately -in response to the pressing demands of the people for places to keep their children while they work, a major change in the role of the primary caretaker is evident. Rather than the assumed close-knit relationship between mother (or surrogate

mother) and child, a more diffuse relationship develops between the "mommy" teacher and her forty or more children. In order to more adequately describe the nursery school situation in Lagos State, a survey of 156 teachers in twenty-five nursery schools was conducted in 1978/79. The major purpose of the research study was to:

(1) describe the local nursery school and its environment; and

(2) relate this description to teacher attitudes regarding the preferred type of activities for a nursery school programme.

Surveying teachers' opinions on why parents sent their children to nursery schools, thirty-two percent of the teachers surveyed atated that the only purpose for sending children to nursery school was to free parents to go out to work. In a similar study conducted in 1980 (Osanyin, 1980) parents however ranked "freedom to work" as fourth on a seven point scale. Development of the child's abilities, and safety and happiness of the child were primary reasons for sending the child to a nursery school. In the eyes of the parents, the role of the mother to provide for the safety and happiness of the child are now transfered to the nursery school teacher.

Preschool education is also seen as a means to eliminate some of the inequalities in the present educational system. Primary education has been free and compulsory in Lagos. The majority of the schools are overcrowded, with inadequate facilities and materials, and, often times, untrained teachers. Over 400 makeshift primary schools were built within a six month period, each including a minimum single story block of six classrooms. Upwards of forty children could be found in each classroom with one teacher and no aide. Hence, the attention given to any one child from the age of six, seven, eight or even nine, is minimal. Teachers and

parents, under the impression that a child will be given a head start in the process of schooling if he/she begins school at the age of three, or even, four, view the nursery school as an initiatory ritual into the competitive nature of the primary school where competition is keen to obtain the first position in the class. Nursery school teachers (88.9%) and parents (92.3%) overwhelmingly agreed with the statement that a child who attends a nursery school stands a better chance of gaining admission into a good primary school and, subsequently, succeeding in that school. Even now with neighbourhood primary schools guaranteeing admission, the nursery school is the first avenue to success in the urben Lagosian schools.

As more nursery schools and day care centers become available in Lagos State not only the wealthy are sending their children to the schools. The rising urban "middle-class" parent sees the school as the avenue of success for their child. "Regardless of what a child learns, there is prestige in attending a good nursery school," state 70 percent of the teachers surveyed. The ones most left out, of course, are the lower class children -- those most likely left to run in the streets or to attend a most unsuitable day care center. Although there are a few market nursery schools in the State, the number is surprisingly small for the large number of market women's children found in the markets. Rising enrollments mean not only an increase in the number of schools, but also that custodial service is provided to more families. As more children are served, parental input into the organization and operation of the schools, by right, must increase.

Goals for Nursery Education

The National Policy on Education is more theoretical than

pragmatic in stating goals for pre-primary education. "Pre-primary education should lay the foundation for the successful pursuit of general interests and attitudes, so that each child might develop to his full stature as responsible citizens." To achieve this, therefore, the policy suggests that efforts be directed toward the social and intellectual development of the child. The objectives of pre-primary education are divided into two broad areas of development: (1) cognitive development -- to prepare the child for the primary school, to inculcate within the child the spirit of inquiry, and to teach the child the rudiments of letters, numbers, colours, shapes and forms; and (2) social-emotional development - to effect a smooth transition from home to school, to teach cooperation, team spirit and good habits and to inculcate the spirit of creativity. Thus, apart from providing adequate custodial care for the child, the pre-school should perform the functions of helping the child to develop to his/her fullest cognitive, social and emotional potentialities.

The government has declared that provision for nursery education is to be left in the hands of private individuals. "The Government will encourage private efforts and provision for preprimary education." This policy again was reiterated by the former head of State, General Obasanjo in his budget speech (1979-80): "As the formative years of a child are very crucial, my government sees it as a social responsibility to establish pre-primary and nursery schools."

Parents, teachers, and the government are consistent in their belief that a primary goal for preschool education in Lagos State and in Nigeria as a whole should be the intellectual and social development of the child. Comments such as the following were recorded in both teacher and parent surveys:

- I want my daughter to know how to say nursery rhymes and how to write the alphabets and numbers at least from one to ten in order to give her a better start in education.

- I want him to have a good academic background.

- A child who attends a nursery school will be a better developed social individual than the one who does not.

- He will be prepared for his future education with politeness and strong social interaction.

-I want him to be socially, mentally, intellectually and morally developed so that in the end he will be a good citizen of his country.

-The nursery school will provide the modern teaching of civilization and knowledge for the future.

Goals for Nigerian preschool education, therefore, do not differ substantially from pre-primary educational goals expressed by such historical figures as Rousseau, Pestallozzi, Montessori, Froebel and others who have worked with children and researched the importance of the child's early experiences. The major goal of these pioneers was to create educational centers in which children experience an environment that would promote their social, psychological and intellectual development.

Although the home and the school can provide care-givers that influence the future development of the child's intellectual, social and emotional well being, Lagosian teachers surveyed are uncertain which most greatly influences the early experiences of the child -- the home or the school. When that statement is coupled with the fact that 54 percent of the teachers surveyed believed that a child's ability to learn was primarily based on what a child was born with, or on heredity rather than on the environment, we have a unique contrast in determining just what should be given priority for preschool education in Lagos. If parents more greatly influence a child's experiences and a child's ability

to learn is based on heredity, than what is the role of the preschool? The preschool must be seen as an extension of the family, where the Lagosian family unit is highly structured and self-controlled. Therefore, preschool experiences are structured, controlled activities to promote the greatest cognitive growth in a short period of time. The environments reglect this goal.

The Nursery School Environment

Prior to 1960, preschool education in Lagos State was virtually non-existent although the oldest preschool institution was established in 1949. It is recorded as the first preschool to be licensed by the State Ministry of Education. The majority of the nursery schools in the State have been in existence for less than eight years. Nursery schoools operate on the same schedule as primary schools; i.e. most of the nursery schools are open 4½-5 hours per day from 8 A.M. to 1 P.M. The average enrollment for a nursery school in Lagos State was two hundred and five children in six classrooms or an everage class size of 35 children. An average of six teachers per school and one headmistress composed the staff. Fifty percent of the teachers were trained and fifty percent were untrained.[1] Although many parents remarked that they would like to have boarding nursery schools, only one boarding school for nursery age children could be found in the state.

Some nursery schools provide private transportation and buses, but most parents opted to bring their children to school. What does a working mother do when she has to leave her job at twelve-thirty, or one o'clock in the afternoon in order to collect her

[1]Trained = a minimum of some form of teaching certificate: Grade II; N.C.E.;

children from the nursery school? In many cases, siblings (an older brother or sister) is able to perform this task. Most nursery schools therefore are attached to primary schools where older brothers and sisters can attend and therefore take care of the younger children at the close of the day.

Of the sample surveyed, only two nursery schools admitted children under the age of two. The average age of entry was 2½ years with the university nursery school admitting at the age of 3. This has posed another problem for the working mother in that she must find another form of day care for the child under 2½ years of age. When there is lack of domestic help and when older boys and girls are in primary schools themselves, the mother must find a reliable daycare center or family home to tend to the baby. Baby-minding is seen as a potentially lucrative economic enterprise and daycare centers and home centers who accomodate children under the age of 2½ have sprung up with alacrity.

With an average class size of 35, the caregiver/child ratio becomes/one to thirty-five. This ratio far exceeds any optimum desired by early childhood educators. When the number of children under care is large, class size becomes the major determinant of the activity that can be performed within the classroom. Larger groups not only reduce the frequency of developmentally effective activity but also increase the possiblity of children remaining un-involved or becoming disengaged or caught-up in tangential or unproductive diversions with their age mates. Academic excellence in writing letters and numbers, in reading and in doing simple additions are the main objectives of most head-mistresses of these schools. Socialization, play, art, creative activities, outdoor play, music -- all assume a minor role in the class

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scheduling.

An infrequent observer will notice that all these subjects appear in the timetable but, upon closer observation, these periods are often overlooked when time necessitates more work on letters and numbers. A review of the timetable shows that fifty-two percent of the daily activities was devoted to academic subjects mathematics (rarely stated as 'numbers'); English language (not language skills); science; and social studies. Only nineteen percent of the time was devoted to creative activities such as art or music. Outdoor activities (in a climate which should encourag total commitment to outdoor education) fell far behind at twelve percent. Snack and resttime assumed seventeen percent of the day. Within a five-hour day, therefore, the time is divided as shown:

Activity	Alloted Time
Academic Subjects	2 hours, 35 minutes
Creative Activities	1 hour
Outdoor Activities	35 minutes
Snack/Rest	50 minutes

The academic appearance of the environment is further enhanced by individual chairs or benches, often lined-up in rows that stretch from /one end of the classroom to the other with little freedom of movement. If the child desires to move, he must step over chairs or walk on desks. Exercise books to record the child's work, report cards, end-of-term examinations, and strict adherence to maintaining discipline by demanding that children remain in their seats are common features of these nursery schools. A bleak picture? Perhaps to those who have seen other alternatives, yes! But to the average Nigerian parent or preschool teacher, these schools are an undisguised blessing. They are the hopes for

the future educational progress of the Nigerian child. The only child who survives the system is the one who can pass the examinations offered at each cross-road of his educational career. Letters and numbers become all important in this objective. The only way to teach, as experience dictates, is by rote memorization and repetition. What kinds of skills and classroom activities perpetuate this kind of environment?

Classroom Activities for the Preschool

In order to develop a basis for suggesting improvements in a programme for Lagosian preschools, we needed to look at some teacher viewpoints on perspectives of preschool activities. One hundred fifty-six teachers responded to the questionnaire administered within 25 schools. Table 1 describes this teaching population. As might be expected, from research in other countries, this teacher population is predominantly female, (120 females as opposed to 36 males). However, contrary to expectation, the teachers were older with more experience. Popular ideas about early childhood education depict the preschool teacher as a young graduate who uses the preschool classroom as his/her entrance into the teaching profession. As teachers become more abundant, preschool teachers stay longer in the profession and cannot as readily use the preschool classroom as a stepping stone to the elementary school. This pattern may soon appear in Nigeria. The everage age of the teacher was 34½ years with over eight years of teaching experience. Lagosian preschool teachers however tend not to have a teaching certificate. Only 24 (or 13 percent) of the survery population had a minimum of a Grade II teaching certificate (usually received after six years of primary education and five years of teacher training college).

Table 1

Characteristics of Teaching Population
N = 156

Sex		Age				Education				Teaching Experience		
M	F	Under 25	25-35	35-45	45+	Primary	Secondary	Teacher Training	Secondary Graduate	0-5yrs.	6-10yrs.	10yrs.+
36	120	29	64	50	13	15	63	24	54	66	52	28

Table 2

Teachers' Orientation to Early Childhood Activities
N = 156

Orientation	Sex		Age				Teaching Experience			
	M	F	Under 25	25-35	35-45	45+	0-5yrs.	6-10yrs.	10yrs.	Total
View as Activities which develop social-emotional skills in a socialization environment	4	29	5	6	14	8	3	10	20	33
Intermediate	12	24	4	4	16	12	21	10	5	36
Viewed as Activities which extend the primary schools' structured cognitive environment	20	67	29	64	40	23	76	50	30	87

Whether a preschool teacher planned her curriculum around the teaching of cognitive readiness skills or assumed that the basics were best taught within an environment stimulating socialization skills determined how she planned and implemented the early childhood syllabus in her classroom. To determine methodologizal variation amongst Lagosian preschool teachers, a 32 item questionnaire elicited their responses on the teaching of numerical, language and socialization skills. Teachers answered the five point Likert-type scale concerning their level of agreement or disagreement with the statements. A descriptive analysis of the educators' views was conducted to determine the mean level of support or oppostion for each of the items. The results, shown in Table 2, clearly show that teachers' primarily view early childhood education programmes as offshoots of the primary school. In other words, responses indicated an early childhood orientation which supports the structured cognitive orientation of Nigerian primary schools. This is in sharp contrast to viewing early childhood education as one which uses the preschool as a creative studio in which children learn the readiness skills within an environment which stimulates the development of socialization skills. Such a socialization environment may be depicted as one in which children freely engage in free-choice activities, with a variety of free-play materials, where growth and development are fostered through processes of sharing and cooperation.

Two trends are noted in Table 2 which are worthy of further investigation. There seems to be a trend that the older teacher and the teacher with more years of teaching experience views early childhood education as a programme for the development of socialization skills. Larger samples, taken from a greater variety of preschool

institutions need to be sampled in order to determine whether age and experience, either acting together or independently, allowed the teacher to rethink his/her perspective on early childhood educational programmes. Actual classroom experiences may teach the teacher to view the preschool child as a student getting ready for primary school rather than as a student already in primary school.

Tables 3 and 4 depict descriptive analyses of teacher's views on specific structured statements, either viewing the nursery school as a programme for the development of readiness skills (Table 4) or viewing nursery schools as socialization environments (Table 3). Mean responses of 2.25 and above were considered in disagreement; responses of 1.74 and below were considered agreement; and responses within the range of 1.75 to 2.24 were considered as undecided.

As seen in Table 3, teachers disagreed with four out of seven statements summarized as social-emotional development skills which can be seen as socialization activities necessary prior to entry into the primary school. For example, teachers disagree with the statement that children should be taught to recognize the sounds of the alphabet. Children should be able to write the letters of the alphabet. Children should learn to work cooperatively but not work peacefully with each other. In interviews with a select sample of teachers, teachers were questioned on their understanding of these statements. Teachers disagreed with these statements because the preschool child should learn how to write the alphabet and the numbers before he or she enters the primary school. Teachers disagreed with the statement that nursery schools should encourage experiences involving size, shape and numbers because these experiences were not readiness skills necessary for

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Table 3

Statements Favouring Socialization Skills

Statement: Nursery schools should:	Group $\bar{X}$	
Encourage experiences involving size, shape, weight and numbers	2.25	Disagreement
Recognize sounds of alphabets, but not write the alphabet	2.65	Disagreement
Help children work peacefully with each other	2.52	Disagreement
Learn cooperation	1.21	Agreement
Share with other children	1.82	Undecided
Develop creative expression	2.50	Disagreement
Understand and recognize own and friend's names	1.76	Undecided

Table 4

Statements Favouring a Structured Cognitive Environment

Statement: Nursery schools should:	Group $\bar{X}$	
Teach the child to read simple stories	1.98	Undecided
Teach the child to write the letters of the alphabet	1.44	Agreement
Do simple addition	1.01	Agreement
Do simple written examinations	1.01	Agreement
Write simple sentences	1.70	Agreement
Gain a good academic background	1.21	Agreement
Write the numbers from 1-10	1.49	Agreement

1.00 - 1.74 Agreement
1.75 - 2.24 Undecided
2.25 - 3.00 Disagreement

the academic work of the primary programmes.

Table 4 shows the mean responses of teachers to statements which favour the preschool environment as an extension of the primary school or as a structured/cognitive environment. With one exception, the reading of simple stories, teachers were in solid agreement with each statement that suggested a skill and/or structure more appropriate to the primary school, such as writing the letters of the alphabet, doing simple addition, writing simple examinations, writing simple sentences, and writing the numbers from one to ten. "Nursery school children should gain a good academic background." This seems to summarize the teachers' views on their orientation to early childhood educational programmes.

As a concluding exercise to determine the teachers' orientation to the programmes, respondents were asked to rank ten activities that might be considered as learning activities within a nursery school. The ranking of these statements appears in Table 5. At first glance, these rankings seem to be in direct contrast to our previous discussions. Rather than the strong structured primary school orientation as previously discussed, these indicate that children should be learning self-expressive and socialization skills -- key readiness skills for the primary school experience to come. From singing and reciting nursery rhymes to learning to express himself/herself freely to working cooperatively in groups, teachers demonstrated a key awareness of the benefits that a nursery school education can bring to a child in the area of socialization (ranks 1, 2, and 3). Drawing and painting simple objects, recognizing and writing the alphabet, and writing numbers from 1-10, substantiate the stronger structured orientation seen in the previous data (ranks 4, 5, and 6). The next two statements (ranks 7 and 8) throwing and catching a ball and to be able to dress/undress himself or herself, depict the teachers' orientation that the development of

Table 5

Rank Order of Activities for Nursery School Programmes

Activity	Rank
Sing/recite nursery rhymes	1
Work cooperatively in groups	2
Able to express himself or herself freely	3
Draw/paint simple objects	4
Recognize/write the alphabet	5
Write numbers from 1-10	6
Throw/catch a ball	7
Dress/undress himself or herself	8
Tell simple stories	9
Do simple addition and subtraction	10

physical skills is a less important development than social and cognitive development. To tell simple stories and to do simple addition and subtraction, key primary school skills, ranked lowest.

How can we explain this apparent contrast? In the first instance, teachers tended to favour an early childhood orientation which would replicate primary schools and rapidly increase the cognitive development of a preschool child. In the second instance, self-expressive and socialization skills seem to take precedence over the development of cognitive skills. Looking at the statement that ranks first, "a child in a nursery school should be able to sing and recite nursery rhymes," teachers viewed this as a necessity to increase spoken English skills of children whose first language was not English. The necessity for children to be skilled in the English language was not only determined by teachers but by parents as well in stating their

preferences for sending their son or daughter to a nursery school. In the less structured open-ended questions which formed the final part of the questionnaire, teachers were asked to complete the sentence: "A nursery school teacher should help each child learn _____." Forty-eight percent of the survey population responded by saying "spoken English skills." Singing and reciting nursery rhymes, therefore, becomes a basic activity to develop spoken English skills critical to good performance in the primary school.

If the development of spoken English skills is critical to the Nigerian child, we would have hoped to have seen the statement: "To tell simple stories" receive a rank higher than nine. In follow-up interviews with teachers, we were told that the nursery school child would not be able to retain stories in his/her mind and therefore be able to recite them. This limitation is compounded with the fact that the child would be reciting the stories in English which would be contrary to his home or native language. Therefore, rather than thinking of singing and reciting nursery rhymes as a potential socialization skill, the nursery school teachers regarded the development of this skill as a prerequisite to the primary school curriculum.

Working cooperatively in groups and learning to express herself/himself freely (rank 2 and 3) reinforced the development of socialization skills. However, in interviews, the majority of the teachers responded by stating that self-expression was a reinforcement for spoken English. Working cooperatively in groups was seen as a major function of nursery schools in order to maintain group discipline and strong classroom management. The fourth ranked activity, that of painting and drawing simple objects, was not seen as a creative activity, but rather as an activity reinforcing the cognitive "teachings" of the day. The emphasis was placed on drawing small, simple objects. The

child in the nursery school classroom must be able to copy simple objects in the exercise books and be able to print the letters on the lines. The reduction of bold letters to small letters and the development of a child's ability for fine motor skills by drawing small objects in the exercise books for counting were major drawing tasks assigned to the child. Rather than seeing drawing and painting simply as a creative activity, the teachers saw these skills as cognitive skills necessary for academic success in the primary school.

The fifth and sixth ranked statements, recognizing and writing the alphabet and writing the numbers from 1-10, were viewed by the teachers as a minimal requirement for a child entering the primary school . These two activities coupled with the activity in the last statement, the ability to do simple addition and subtraction, are the activities which are most frequently seen in the timetable, receiving the greatest percentage of time. Addition and subtraction skills were ranked last because teachers felt that only the very capable children would actually be able to perform these functions, although the skills should be introduced to all. Primary school teachers would expect nursery school children to perform the elementary addition and subtraction skills.

The physical activities, ranking seventh and eighth, throwing and catching a ball and dressing/undressing himself/herself, were seen by the teachers as a primary responsibility of the parents not of the school. Physical activities should take place in the home as should the play activities of the child. Outdoor play is a separate timetable acitvity not to be integrated into the other activities of the classroom. Although play is seen as an essential or important activity of the classroom, most teachers agreed that "there is a time for play and a time for work."

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Therefore, in surveying teacher attitudes on preferred programmes of classroom activities for the nursery school, the majority of teachers favored an environment which stimulated cognitive development through the teaching of readiness skills in a structured format. If teachers, in some instances, seemed to favor a more open environment which emphasized the development of social-emotional skills within a socialization environment, then these teachers were doing so only as a means for fostering the more demanding cognitive skills such as spoken English or alphabet writing in exercise books. Few teachers favored an environment for learning through free play independent choice of activity, or small group participation. Children must be trained for the primary scools' academic highly structured environment.

Conclusion

Nursery school education is making an impact on Lagosian society and its families. Sheer numbers alone support this statement. Over 5,000 children enrolled in the twenty-five nursery schools in this study show us the impact that nursery education is having on the Lagosian society. Parents and teachers alike view the nursery school as a place for intellectual, cognitive development. In addition, having preschools available frees the mother to go out to work and provides an avenue to future enrollment in top primary schools. "There is prestige in attending a good nursery school." Even with neighbourhood schools, parents can still find 'ways' to change the primary school allocated to their child. A nursery school education oftentimes gives preference to that child when seeking admission to another primary school.

Teachers are uncertain about whether or not parents or schools are prime determinants of the experiences that a child will have;

whether or not a child's ability to learn is primarily based on herdity or environment. This uncertainty may be explained by their belief in the legitimate role of parent and family in child-rearing. In rapidly developing urban centres, such as Lagos, there seems to be a tendency to maintain strong structured home environments, similar to the classrooms portrayed in this survey. Parental and teacher viewpoints on nursery school education, therefore do not conflict, at least amongst parents of so-called 'middle-class'homes.

On the other hand, teachers are uncertain about whether or not nursery school education is preferable to in-home early education programmes. Should policies be established to keep mothers at home? This uncertainty may be explained by their strong convictions that nursery school educational programmes are beneficial to a child's cognitive development but not necessarily to a child's social-emotional development. That is the home's responsibility. Teachers are more and certain that urban families can provide strong supportive environments for the optimum social growth of the child. The nursery school is not needed for this function. Perhaps experience will show that quality nursery school programmes can, and should, offer an environment favouring the development of socialization skills. What role the family will perform in the next decade in providing early educational environments for the young child is a research problem worthy of further investigation. What controls are to be placed on the expansion of preschool programmes in the State? How are the teachers to cope with the stresses and strains that come with the responsibility of 30 to 40 children in each classroom? These and other questions will stimulate answers to the educational dilemna -- are all our children learning?